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ABSTRACT

According to research of the 1980's in the ERIC system and elsewhere, there seem to be three schools of thought about the most effective ways to reward good teachers and provide incentives for improving teacher performance. The schools of thought described include (1) intrinsic rewards only; (2) specific additional monetary rewards for specific performance; and (3) both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards. The types of "professional" or intrinsic incentives to which teachers respond positively are listed. Tennessee Governor Lamar Alexander's 10 prescriptions for rewarding good teachers are offered. Appended are 23 references. (SI)

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REWARDING GOOD TEACHERS

A Research Brief

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REWARDING GOOD TEACHERS

A RESEARCH BRIEF

As you look through the research of the 1980's in the ERIC System and elsewhere, there seem to be three schools of thought about the most effective ways to reward good teachers and provide incentives for improving teacher performance:

A. INTRINSIC REWARDS ONLY:

The first school maintains that teachers don't work for money anyway and therefore are not motivated by monetary rewards. Intrinsic rewards such as a sense of accomplishment or automony in the classroom are sufficient incentives to good performance.

While the proponents of this school might seem self-serving, it should be noted that in survey after survey, teachers themselves have indicated that they are most strongly motivated by such intrinsic rewards as a sense of influence and achievement in the classroom, pride in their workmanship, self-respect, a sense of responsibility, interactions with colleagues and opportunities to plan with them.

B. SPECIFIC ADDITIONAL MONETARY REWARDS FOR SPECIFIC PERFORMANCE:

The second school believes that providing additional monetary rewards for specific types of performance, such as innovative instruction, performance contracts, extra duties, etc., will indeed reward teachers and motivate them to work harder and better.

This school of thought acknowledges the power of intrinsic motivation, but also supports such monetary rewards as extra pay for extra duties, some forms of "merit pay", and career ladders (including some mentor teacher programs such as exist in Washington). Of course, many of these programs may exist primarily for other reasons -- to make sure that certain part-time assignments are filled by skilled staff or to increase the speed at which new teachers learn the business, for instance -- but these programs do provide financial and professional rewards for those teachers who are selected to participate and who perform satisfactorily.

C. BOTH EXTRINSIC AND INTRINSIC REWARDS:

The third school holds that first a teacher must be adequately paid, and then all the intrinsic rewards of the profession must also be provided. Only in this way are good teachers attracted to the profession in the first place and then motivated to stay and improve.

> Proponents of this school include such prestigious groups as the Educational Commission of the States, whose 1984 "Teacher Quality Series" first debunks ten "political myths about reforming teaching" and then concludes that "the ability to attract, train, and keep good teachers depends heavily on base salary, the organizational conditions of work, and the professional development opportunities in addition to the type of incentive system offered by the school."
>
> The equally prestigious Carnegie Corporation's Task Force on Teaching as a Profession (1986) supports first making teacher compensation competitive with that of other professions and then also "creating a professional environment for teaching," characterized by such intrinsic rewards as participating in goal-setting and other decision-making activities. This Task Force also proposes a "Lead Teacher" or career ladder approach to providing both extrinsic and intrinsic incentives.
>
> Educational Research Service (ERS) President Glen Robinson, in a 1984 report reviewing incentive pay approaches, lists 14 requirements for a successful incentive program, including both "adequate base salary level" and also such intrinsic rewards as "staff involvement in program development." A successful incentive program, he says, is "adequately financed," and "provides benefits to all who qualify."

In a practical sense, then, we can justify just about any positive position on teacher incentive programs, from supporting purely non-monetary rewards such as increased visibility and encouragement, to promoting larger overhaul programs lobbying for higher funding levels for salaries and providing monetary incentives for additional work, while increasing the professional stature of teachers across the board.

On the other hand, this range of perspectives does contain some common threads. Whatever position one holds on increasing teacher salaries, agreement seems to exist on the types of "professional" or intrinsic incentives to which teachers respond positively:

> Opportunities to increase self-respect, responsibility, a sense of accomplishment, pride in workmanship, and self-confidence.
>
> Opportunities for classroom and collegial interaction, for sharing interest and enthusiasm for subject matter (especially secondary) and for experiencing challenges in teaching.
>
> Opportunity for professional growth and attendance at conferences.

An environment of trust and encouragement, leader support.

Visibility, praise and recognition, provision of sufficient materials, mini-grants which encourage innovation and diversity in teaching. (In our state and ESD service area, of course, mini-grants are a common reward/incentive for teachers.)

A sense of influence, autonomy, involvement in decision-making, job-security.

Perhaps the most novel set of (unresearched) suggestions "to honor, respect and award prestige to teachers" came in 1985 from Governor Lamar Alexander of Tennessee. His prescription:

1. Do something about the titles of teachers. (Something "prestigious")
2. Make awards...for teachers equal to the awards we give athletes and bands.
3. Award great teachers honorary degrees.
4. Find more meaningful summer work for teachers.
5. Provide teachers a secretary.
6. Encourage teachers to exert educational leadership.
7. Make it easier for people to move in and out of the teaching profession.
8. Permit teachers to act as community leaders. (Appoint them to commissions and boards.)
9. The teaching profession should develop more means of recognizing its own most distinguished members.
10. Recognize teachers as opinion leaders. (Invite them to deliver guest lectures, to talk about education at business meetings, etc.)

- J. Newman
ESD 189

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